

## TO THE MOST EXCELLENT SEÑOR DON THEODOSIO OF PORTUGAL

*Duke of Braganza and of Barcelos, etc.*

Through having heard in my childhood, most serene Prince, from my father and from his relatives, of the heroic virtues and great exploits of the kings and princes of glorious memory, your Excellency's progenitors, and of the prowess in arms of the nobility of that famous kingdom of Portugal; and through having read of them here later in the course of my life—not only those they have performed in Spain, but also those in Africa and in the great oriental India—and of their extensive and admirable navigation, and of the toils and hardships the illustrious Lusitanians have experienced in its conquest and in preaching of the holy gospel, and of the noble things the kings and princes have ordered for the one and the other, I have always been much inclined toward the service of their Majesties and of all those of their kingdom. This inclination was converted later into obligation, because the first land I saw when I came from my own, which is El Perú, was that of Portugal—the island of El Fayal and La Tercera, and the royal city of Lisbon, in which the royal ministers and the citizens, and those of the islands, being such religious and charitable people, gave me as warm a reception as if I had been a native son of one of them. In order not to weary your Excellency, I do not give a full account of the gifts and favors they bestowed upon me, one of which was to save me from death. Seeing myself, therefore, on the one hand so obligated and on the other so inclined, I did not know how to repay my obligation or how I could show my affection, except by this bold act (too much so for an Indian) of offering and dedicating this *History* to your Excellency. I have been moved no little to do so by the exploits recounted therein of the gentlemen and hidalgos, natives of this kingdom, who went on the conquest of La Gran Florida. It is fitting that they should thus employ themselves worthily and appropriately, in order that they may live under your Excellency's protection and may be esteemed and favored as they deserve.

I beg your Excellency that, with the affability and generosity to which

your royal blood obligates you, you will be pleased to accept and receive this small *servicio*, and the desire I have always had and now have to see myself included among the number of the subjects and servants of your Excellency's royal house. This favor being conferred, as I hope, I shall have many of my affectionate desires gratified, and with this same favor I shall be able to repay and satisfy the obligation that I owe to the natives of this most Christian kingdom, for by means of your Excellency's condescension and favor I shall be one of them. May our Lord preserve your Excellency for many happy years as a refuge and protection of the poor and needy. Amen.

THE INCA GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA

## PREFACE TO THE READER

Conversing many times and in various places with a gentleman, a great friend of mine, who was on this expedition, and hearing from him of the many and very great feats that Spaniards and Indians alike performed in the course of it, it seemed to me an unbecoming thing and a great pity that deeds as heroic as any that have taken place in the world should remain in perpetual oblivion. I myself, therefore, being obligated to both nations, because I am the son of a Spaniard and an Indian woman, importuned that gentleman many times that we write this history, I serving him as amanuensis. And although this end was desired by both of us, it was prevented by the times and occasions that arose, now of war, to which I went, now of long periods when we were apart, in the course of which more than twenty years passed. With time, however, my desire increased, and on the other hand the fear that if one of us should die our purpose would never be fulfilled, because, I being dead, he would have no one to encourage him and act as clerk; and he being lost to me, I would not know from whom to obtain the account that he could give me. I determined to make an end of the impediments and delays that existed by leaving the establishment and ease I had in a pueblo where I was living, and go to his. There we busied ourselves with care and diligence in writing down everything that took place on this expedition from its beginning to its end, for the honor and fame of the Spanish nation, which has done such great things in the New World, and no less for that of the Indians, who in this history show themselves and appear worthy of the same honor.

In this history, besides the exploits and hardships the Christians performed and passed through, singly and in common, and besides the notable things that were found among the Indians, an account is given of the many and very large provinces the governor and *adelantado* Hernando de Soto and many other gentlemen—Extremadurans, Portuguese, Andalusians, Castilians, and those from all the other provinces of Spain—discovered in the great kingdom of La Florida, in order that henceforth (the bad name that

that country has of being sterile and swampy, which it is on the seacoast, being obliterated) Spain may be obliged to win and settle it, even though, aside from the principal motive, which is the increase of our holy Catholic faith, it is only to establish colonies where her sons can be sent to live, as the ancient Romans did when there was no room for them in their own country. It is a fertile land, abounding in everything necessary for human life, and it may be made much more productive †[than it is naturally at present, with crops and cattle that can be introduced there from Spain and other places, for which it is very well fitted, as will be seen in the course of this *History*.

The chief care that has been exercised was to write the things that are told herein as they are and as they happened, because my main purpose is for that land to be won, to which end, as has been said, I attempted to obtain from the one who gave me the account of everything that he saw, he being a nobleman and hidalgo and as such taking a pride in telling the exact truth in regard to everything. The royal Council of the Indies (as I know) has summoned him often, as a trustworthy man, to make statements before it concerning the things that took place on this expedition as well as on others in which he took part.

He was a very good soldier and often was a commander, and he participated in all the events of this discovery. Thus he was able to give the account of this *History* in a form as complete as it is. And if anyone should say what is often said in attempting to censure as cowards or liars those who give good accounts of the particular events that take place in the battles in which they participate—for they say that if they were fighting, how could they see all that happened in the course of the battle; and if they saw it, how could they fight, because two jobs together, such as watching and fighting, could not be done well—the answer to this is that it is a common custom among these soldiers, as it is in all wars throughout the world, to return to report to the general and the other officers the most notable dangers they have passed through in the battles. And often when what some captain or soldier reported was very extravagant and difficult to believe, those who heard him went to see and ascertain the facts for themselves. And in this manner he could have knowledge of everything that he told me in order that I might write it down. He was aided no little in recalling past events to memory by the many and repeated questions I would ask him concerning them and concerning the peculiarities and qualities of that country.

---

†Translator's note: This section set off by brackets (pp. 54–56) is missing from the photostatic copy of the 1605 edition, and has been supplied from the 1723 edition.

Besides the authority of my author, I have the confirmation of two other soldiers, eyewitnesses, who took part in the same expedition. One is named Alonso de Carmona, a native of the villa of Priego. Having traveled through La Florida during the six years of this discovery, and afterward spent many others in El Perú, and then having returned to his own country, because of the pleasure he received from the recollection of his past labors he wrote these two *Peregrinations* of his, and so named them. Not knowing that I was writing this *History*, he sent me both of them, so that I might see them. I was very pleased with them because his account of La Florida, although very brief, and without order either in time or in events, and without naming provinces, except a very few, jumping about from one place to another, recounts the most notable events of our *History*.

The other soldier is called Juan Coles, a native of the villa of Zafra. He wrote another disorganized and brief *Relation* of this same discovery and tells of the most notable events that occurred in it. He wrote them down at the request of a provincial of the province of Santa Fe in the Indies, named Fray Pedro Aguado, of the Order of seraphic father St. Francis. This religious, with the desire of serving the Catholic king, Don Felipe II, had collected many and varied accounts from trustworthy persons of the discoveries they had witnessed in the New World, particularly in this first one made in the Indies, including all the islands they call the Windward Islands, Vera Cruz, Tierra Firme, El Darién, and other provinces in those regions. These accounts he left in Córdoba in the power and custody of a printer, and busied himself with other matters in the interest of his Order, abandoning his accounts, which still were not in proper form for printing. I saw them and they were in very bad condition, half of them having been consumed by moths and mice. They covered more than a ream of paper, divided into sections just as each narrator had written them, and among them I found the one I mentioned of Juan Coles. This was a little after Alonso de Carmona had sent me his, and although it is true that I had finished writing this *History*, seeing these two eyewitnesses so in agreement with it, it seemed well to me (on going back to rewrite it) to name them in the proper places and to include in many passages a literal copy of their own words, in order to present two witnesses confirming my author, so that it might be seen that all three accounts agree.

It is true that in their proceedings they have no regard for chronology, unless it be at the beginning, nor for order in the events they recount, because they put some too soon and others too late, nor do they name provinces, except for a few scattered ones. They simply tell the most important

things that they saw as they happen to remember them; but upon comparing the events they recount with those of our *History*, they are the same, and in some cases they report them with the addition of greater amplification and embellishment, as will be seen set down in their own words.

These inadvertences they had must have been due to the fact that they did not write with the intention of printing; at any rate Carmona did not, because he desired no more than that his relatives and neighbors read of the things that he had seen in the New World, and thus he sent me the *Relations* as an acquaintance who had been born in the Indies, so that I also might see them. Nor did Juan Coles put his account in historical form, and the reason might have been that since the work was not to come out in his name he was under no obligation to take the trouble to put it in order, and told what he remembered more as an eyewitness than as the author of the work, understanding that the father provincial who asked for the *Relation* would put it in the proper form for printing. Thus the account is written in the manner of a legal process, appearing that another person set down what he said, because sometimes it says: "This witness states thus and so"; and again it says: "This declarant states that he saw such and such a thing." In other places he speaks as if he himself had written, saying, "We saw this and did that, etc." Both accounts are so short that that of Juan Coles contains no more than ten sheets of paper, written in a legal script with the letters linked together, and that of Alonso de Carmona has eight and a half sheets, though on the contrary it is in a very cramped handwriting.

Some noteworthy things they tell, such as Juan Coles saying that he, going on with other infantrymen (it must have been without the general's orders), found a temple with an idol decorated with many pearls and seed pearls, and that it had in its mouth a hyacinth [i.e., a precious stone, perhaps a sapphire] as long as the distance between the ends of the thumb and forefinger, and as thick as the thumb, which he took, without anyone seeing him, etc.—this and many other similar things I did not include in our *History* because of not knowing in what provinces they occurred, for in this matter of naming the lands through which they passed, as I have already said, both are very defective, especially Juan Coles. In short, I say that they did not write of any other incidents except those in which I mention them, which are the most important ones. And I take pleasure in referring to them in these places in order to be able to say that I write from the accounts of three authors who confirm one another. In addition to these I have in my support a great favor that one of his Catholic Majesty's chroniclers did me, in writing, saying among other things the following: "I have compared this

*History* with an account I have, which was the one drawn up in México for Don Antonio de Mendoza from the [literary] remains of this excellent Castilian who entered La Florida, and I find that it is truthful and in conformity with the said account, etc."

This is sufficient in order that it may be believed that we did not write fiction; it would not have been just for me to do so, having to present this account to the whole Spanish commonwealth, which would have reason for indignation against me if I had acted falsely and without good faith.

Nor would the Eternal Majesty (which is what we ought to fear most) fail to be gravely offended if I, in attempting to incite and persuade the Spaniards to win that land for the increase of our holy Catholic faith, should mislead with fables and fictions those who desired to employ their property and lives in such an enterprise. Certainly, stating the whole truth, I say that I was moved by no other purpose in laboring and having written this work than the desire that the Christian religion be extended over such a large and broad country; that I neither aspire to nor hope for temporal benefits from this long labor; that long ago I gave up pretensions and abandoned hopes because of the adversity of my fortune. Looking at the matter dispassionately, however, I ought to congratulate myself very heartily for its having treated me badly, for if it had conferred its benefits and favors generously upon me, perhaps I would have gone by other roads and paths than I have taken, to worse misfortunes, or it would have drowned me in the waves and tempests of this great sea, as it almost always drowns those whom it has most favored and raised to the grandeurs of this world. With its frowns and persecutions it has forced me, having experienced them, to flee from it and hide myself in the refuge and shelter of the disillusioned, which are the retreats of solitude and poverty where, consoled and satisfied with the scantiness of my few possessions, I pass a quiet and peaceful life, thanks to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, more envied by the rich than envious of them. In this life (so as not to be idle, which is more wearying than labor) I have engaged in other efforts and hopes more satisfying and more diverting to the mind than those of wealth, such as translating the three *Diálogos de Amor* of León Hebreo; having published them, I employed myself in writing this *History*. With the same pleasure I am now constructing, forming, and giving the finishing touches to that of El Perú: the origin of the Inca kings, their antiquity, idolatry and conquests, their laws and the method of their government in peace and in war. Through Divine favor, I now see myself almost at the end of all this. Although they are labors, and not small ones, in order to attempt and attain another, better end I value them more than the favors my fortune

might have conferred upon me in case it had been very prosperous and favorable; because I hope in God that these labors will do me more honor and bring me better fame than the possessions I might have acquired from the gifts of this lady. Because of all this I am rather her debtor than her creditor, and as such I give her many thanks, because at her insistence, impelled by the Divine clemency, I was allowed to offer and present this *History* to the whole world. It is written in six Books, corresponding to the six years that were spent on the expedition. The Second Book and the Fifth were each divided into two parts; the Second so that it might not be so long as to weary the eye, for since in that year there occurred more things to relate than in any one of the others, it seemed well to me to divide it into two parts, so that each part would be proportionate in size to the other Books and the events of one year would be included in a single Book.

The Fifth Book was divided so that the acts of the governor and adelantado Hernando de Soto might be a part to themselves and not joined to those of Luis de Moscoso de Alvarado, who was the one that succeeded him in the governorship. Thus in the first part of that Book the history of Hernando de Soto proceeds down to his death and the two burials they gave him. The second part deals with what his successor did and ordered until the end of the expedition, which was in the sixth year of this *History*. I beg that the latter may be received in the same spirit in which I offer it, and that I may be pardoned for the faults it contains, because I am an Indian. To such, because they are barbarians and not instructed in sciences or arts, it is permissible that they shall not be guided by the rigorous precepts of art or sciences in what they may say or do, because they have not learned them; but they should be accepted as they are.

Carrying this pious consideration further, it would be a noble finesse and a generous ingenuity to favor through me (though I do not deserve it) all the Indians, mestizos, and criollos of El Perú so that they, seeing the kindness and favor that the prudent and wise are conferring upon the beginner among them, may be encouraged to go further in such things, produced by their uncultivated faculties. I hope that the illustrious of understanding and the generous of spirit will confer this kindness and favor upon them and me with much liberality and applause, because my desire and good will in their service (as my poor labors, past, present, and to come, will show) have well deserved it. May our Lord, etc.



FIRST BOOK  
OF THE  
HISTORY OF LA FLORIDA,  
BY THE INCA

*It includes the description of it; the customs of its natives;  
who was its first discoverer, and those who have gone there  
afterward; the people whom Hernando de Soto took there;  
the singular events of his navigation; that which  
he ordered and prepared in La Havana; and  
how he embarked for La Florida. It  
contains fifteen  
chapters.*



HERNANDO DE SOTO ASKS OF THE EMPEROR  
CHARLES V THE CONQUEST OF LA FLORIDA.  
HIS MAJESTY GRANTS IT TO HIM

The adelantado Hernando de Soto, former governor and captain-general of the provinces and seigniories of the great kingdom of La Florida, whose history this is, together with that of many other Spanish gentlemen and Indians—which we are attempting to write for the glory and honor of the Most Holy Trinity, God, our Lord, and with the desire of advancing His holy Catholic faith and the Crown of Spain—was present at the first conquest of El Perú, and at the imprisonment of Atahualpa, the tyrant king. This king, being a bastard son, usurped that kingdom from the legitimate heir and was the last of the Incas that monarchy had. Through his tyrannies and cruelties, which were even greater when exercised against those of his own flesh and blood, the empire was lost; or at least the discord and division that his rebellion and tyranny occasioned among the natives facilitated the Spaniards' winning it with the ease with which they did (as we shall tell elsewhere, with Divine aid). From this conquest, as is well known, came that ransom so superb, vast and rich that it exceeds all belief that can be given to human histories, according to the report of an accountant of his Majesty's hacienda in El Perú, who stated the value of the fifth of it. Calculating the whole from the fifth and reducing it to the usual coinage of Castilian ducats, each worth 375 *maravedís*, it is known that it was equivalent to 3,293,000 ducats and some *dineros*, not including what was squandered without being counted for the fifths, which was another large sum. From this quantity and from the advantages that fell to him as such an important captain, and with what the Indians presented to him in Cuzco when he and Pedro del Barco went alone to see that city, and with the gifts this same King Atahualpa gave him (because he took a fancy to him, he being the first Spaniard whom he had seen and spoken to), this gentleman had as his share more than 100,000 ducats.

Hernando de Soto brought this sum of money when he, together with sixty other conquistadores, arrived in Spain with the shares and profits they had acquired in Cassamarca [Cajamarca]. Although with this quantity of treasure (which then, because so much had not yet come from the Indies as has been brought here since, was of more value than at present) he could

have purchased in his own country, which was Villanueva de Barcarota, much more property than could be bought at present, because then possessions were not held in the esteem and value that they have today, he did not desire to buy it. Rather, his ideas and his spirit elevated by the things that he had experienced in El Perú, not content with what he had already done and acquired, but desiring to undertake other similar or greater exploits, if greater there could be, he went to Valladolid, where the Emperor Charles V, king of Spain, had his court. He petitioned that he be granted the favor of the conquest of the kingdom of La Florida (so called because of its coast having been discovered on Easter Day), which he desired to make at his own cost and risk, expending therein his property and life to serve his Majesty and advance the Crown of Spain.

This Hernando de Soto did, moved by generous envy and magnanimous jealousy of the deeds newly done in México by the marqués del Valle, Don Hernando Cortés, and in Perú by Marqués Don Francisco Pizarro and Adelantado Don Diego de Almagro, which he saw and helped to perform. However, since his free and generous spirit could not tolerate being subject or inferior to those just named in valor and energy for war, or in prudence and discretion for peace, he left behind those exploits, thought so great, and undertook these other, for him, greater ones, for in them he lost his life and the property that he had won in the others. Wherefore, because of all the principal conquests of the New World having been made in such a manner, some, not without the fault of malice and with excess of envy, have been moved to say that Spain has bought the dominion of all the New World at the expense of madmen, fools, and visionaries, without having expended any other, greater treasure. They do not consider that they are her children and that the greatest resource and treasure that she has always had, and now has, was in producing and rearing them such as they have been in order to win the New World and make her feared by the Old. In the course of this *History* we shall make use of the two terms, Spaniards and Castilians; note that we mean to signify by them the same thing.

## II

### DESCRIPTION OF LA FLORIDA, AND WHO WAS THE FIRST DISCOVERER OF IT, AND THE SECOND, AND THIRD

The description of the great land of La Florida will be a difficult thing to depict as completely as we should like to do, for, as it is so extensive and large in every direction, and is not won or even discovered in its entirety, its confines are unknown.

What is most certain and not unknown is that to the south lies the Ocean Sea and the great island of Cuba. To the north (although they claim Hernando de Soto went a thousand leagues inland, as we shall tell below) it is not known where it ends—whether it borders upon the sea or upon other lands.

To the east it terminates at the land they call Los Bacallaos, though a certain French cosmographer places another extremely large province between, which he calls New France, because of having simply the name there.

To the west it borders upon the provinces of the Seven Cities, so called by the discoverers of those lands. They, having left México by order of Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza, discovered them in the year 1539, taking as captain Juan Vázquez Coronado, vecino of the said city. By vecino is understood, in the Indies, he who has a *repartimiento* of Indians; this is the significance of the term *vecino*, because they were obliged to maintain a domicile [*vecindad*] where they had the Indians, and they could not come to Spain without the king's permission under penalty of loss of the *repartimiento*, after the elapse of two years during which they have not maintained a domicile.

Juan Vázquez Coronado, having discovered an extensive and very fine country, could not settle it because of the great difficulties that he encountered. He returned to México, much to the viceroy's regret, because the large and very good force of men and horses he had assembled for the conquest had been dissipated without any gain whatever. La Florida also borders to the west upon the province of the Chichimecas, a most courageous people who live along the limits of the lands of México.

The first Spaniard who discovered La Florida was Juan Ponce de León, a gentleman who was a native of León and a nobleman, having been governor of Puerto Rico. Inasmuch as the Spaniards of that time thought of nothing except the discovery of new lands, he fitted out two caravels and went in

search of an island they called Bimini or, according to others, Buyoca. There, according to fabulous tales of the Indians, was a fountain that rejuvenated the aged. He traveled in search of it for many days, lost, and without finding it. At the end of this time he was driven by a storm on the coast to the north of the island of Cuba, which coast he named Florida because of the day on which he saw it being Easter. It was in the year 1513, and according to the reckoners, Easter was celebrated that year on March 27.

Juan Ponce de León was content simply with seeing that it was land, and without making any effort to ascertain whether it was the mainland or an island, he came to Spain to ask for the government and conquest of that country. The Catholic kings granted it to him, and he went thither with three ships in the year '15; others say that it was in '21. I agree with Francisco López de Gómara: Whether it was the one year or the other matters little. Having experienced some misfortunes on the voyage, he landed in La Florida. The Indians came out to meet him and fought with him bravely until they routed him and killed almost all the Spaniards who had come with him. No more than seven escaped, among them Juan Ponce de León; they went, wounded, to the island of Cuba, where all died of the wounds they bore. Such was the unhappy end of the journey of Juan Ponce de León, the first discoverer of La Florida, and it appears that he left his misfortune as a heritage to those who have followed him there on the same errand.

A few years thereafter a pilot named Miruelo, master of a caravel, while traveling about bartering with the Indians, was driven by a storm upon the coast of La Florida, or to some other land whose location is not known, where the Indians received him peaceably. In the course of his trade, called barter [*rescate*], they gave him some trifles of silver and a small quantity of gold, with which he returned very satisfied to the island of Santo Domingo, without having performed the office of a good pilot in marking out the land and taking the latitude, as he might well have done to avoid finding himself in the plight in which he was afterward by reason of this negligence.

At this same time seven wealthy men of Santo Domingo, among whom was one Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, *oidor* of that *audiencia* and former appellate judge in the same island before the *audiencia* was founded, formed a company and fitted out two ships and sent them among those islands to seek and bring out Indians, which they must obtain in any way possible in order to set them to work in the gold mines the company owned. The ships set out on their worthy enterprise, and during a severe storm they came by accident upon the cape they named Santa Elena, because it was her day, and the river called Jordán, so named on sight by the mariner who first saw it. The Span-

iards went ashore, and the Indians advanced with great fear to see the ships, as a strange thing they had never before seen, and they wondered at seeing bearded men who wore clothing. But with all this they treated with one another amicably, each displaying the things that they had. The Indians gave some fine marten-skins that gave off a very fragrant odor, some irregular pearls [*aljófara*: also, a seed pearl—DB], and a small amount of silver. The Spaniards also gave them their articles of trade, which being ended, and the ships having taken the stores they needed and the necessary wood and water, the Spaniards very affably invited the Indians to come aboard to see the ships and the things that they carried in them. Whereupon, trusting in the friendship and good treatment they had experienced, and in order to see things so new to them, more than 130 Indians came aboard. When they had them below decks, the Spaniards, seeing the good catch that they had made, raised anchor and set sail for Santo Domingo. But on the way one of the two ships was lost, and the Indians who remained in the other, though they reached Santo Domingo, allowed themselves to die of sadness and hunger, for they refused to eat from anger at the deception that had been practiced upon them under color of friendship.

### III

#### CONCERNING OTHER DISCOVERERS WHO HAVE GONE TO LA FLORIDA

With the account that these Castilians gave in Santo Domingo of what they had seen, and with that of Miruelo, both of which came at almost the same time, the oidor Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón came to Spain to ask for the conquest and government of that province, which, among the many names that La Florida had, was called Chicoria. The emperor granted it, honoring him with the habit of the Order of Santiago. The oidor returned to Santo Domingo and in the year 1524 fitted out three large ships and, taking Miruelo as pilot, went with them in search of the land that Miruelo had discovered, for they said that it was richer than Chicoria. But Miruelo, as much as he tried, was never able to hit upon the place where his discovery had been made, as a result of which misfortune he fell into such melancholy that within a few days he lost his reason and his life.

The licentiate Ayllón passed on in search of his province of Chicoria, and

in the Río Jordán he lost the flagship. With his two remaining ships he continued his voyage to the east and reached the coast of a pleasant and delightful country near Chicoria, where the Indians received him with much festivity and rejoicing. The oidor, believing that everything was now favorable to him, ordered that two hundred Spaniards disembark and go to see the pueblo of those Indians, which was three leagues inland. The Indians guided them, and after they had regaled them for three or four days and assured them of their friendship, they killed them one night and made a sudden assault at dawn upon the few Spaniards who had remained with the oidor on the coast to guard the ships. Having killed and wounded most of them, they forced them, broken and defeated, to embark and go back to Santo Domingo, thereby avenging the Indians of the previous expedition.

Among the few Spaniards who escaped with the oidor Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón was a gentleman named Hernando Mogollón, a native of the city of Badajoz, who later went to El Perú where he recounted at great length that which we have told briefly of this journey. I knew him there.

Following the oidor Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, Pánphilo de Narváez went to La Florida, in the year 1557,<sup>†</sup> where he perished miserably, with all the Spaniards whom he took with him, as Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, who went with him as treasurer of the *real hacienda*, recounts in his *Naufragios*. This man escaped, with three other Spaniards and a Negro; and God, our Lord, granted them such favors that they were able to perform miracles in His name, with which they acquired such reputation and esteem among the Indians that they worshipped them as gods. However, these Spaniards did not wish to remain among them, but left the country as rapidly as they could and came to Spain to ask for new governments; and having received them, the course of events was such that they unhappily lost everything, as Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca himself relates. He died in Valladolid, having come under arrest from the Río de la Plata, where he went as governor.

When Pánphilo de Narváez made his voyage to La Florida he took a pilot named Miruelo, a relative of the other and as unfortunate as he in his office, for he was never able to find the land his uncle had discovered, from whose account he had information concerning it, for which reason Pánphilo de Narváez had taken him with him.

Following this unfortunate captain, the adelantado Hernando de Soto

---

<sup>†</sup>Translator's note: The 1723 edition has 1527. Neither date is correct: Pánphilo de Narváez reached Florida on April 14, 1528. See Woodbury Lowery, *Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States, 1513-1561*, p. 177.



went to La Florida, entering it in the year '39. His history and that of the many other famous Spanish gentlemen and Indians we are attempting to write at length, together with an account of the many and large provinces he discovered up to the time of his end and death, and that which his captains and soldiers did afterward until they left the land and at length reached México.

## IV

### CONCERNING STILL OTHERS WHO HAVE MADE THE SAME JOURNEY TO LA FLORIDA, AND CONCERNING THE CUSTOMS AND USUAL ARMS OF ITS NATIVES

As soon as the death of Hernando de Soto was known in Spain many pretenders arose to ask for the government and conquest of La Florida. The emperor Charles V, refusing them all, in the year 1549 sent at his own expense a Dominican religious named Fray Luis Cáncer Balbastro as leader of his Order, which had offered to convert those Indians to the evangelical doctrine with their preaching. Having arrived in La Florida, these religious disembarked to preach, but the Indians, taught by their former experience with the Castilians, refusing to hear them, fell upon them and killed Fray Luis and two of his companions. The others took refuge on the ship and returned to Spain, affirming that such barbarous and inhuman people had no desire to hear sermons.

In the year 1562 a son of the oidor Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón asked for the same conquest and government, and they gave it to him. He died in La Española while preparing his expedition, and his illness and death were caused by melancholy and despair from the difficulties that arose from day to day that made the enterprise increasingly impossible. Subsequently others have gone there, among them the adelantado Pedro Meléndez de Valdés [Menéndez de Aviles]; I refrain from writing about them for I have not complete information concerning their acts.

This, though brief, is the most accurate account that it has been possible to give of the land of La Florida, and of those who have gone there to discov-

er and conquer it. Before going on, it will be well to describe some of the customs the Indians of that great kingdom had in common, at least those the adelantado Hernando de Soto discovered. In almost all of the provinces he traversed those customs are the same, and if they differ in some places, we shall take care to note them in the course of our *History*; but in general they all follow almost the same manner of life.

These Indians are a heathen race, and idolaters; they worship the sun and the moon as chief deities but without ceremonies involving idols, or sacrifices, or prayers, or other superstitions such as other heathens practice. They had temples that served them as burial places rather than as houses of prayer where, for pomp and display, besides being sepulchers for their dead, they kept all the best and richest of their treasures. These tombs and temples were held in extreme veneration, and they placed at their doors trophies of the victories that they won over their enemies.

In general they married only one woman, and she was obliged to be most faithful to her husband under penalty imposed by the laws they had for the punishment of adultery, which in some provinces was a cruel death and in others very ignominious punishment, as we shall tell later in its place. Because of their privileged position, the rulers had the right to take as many wives as they wished, and this law or privilege of the rulers was observed throughout the Indies in the New World, but always it was with the distinction of the principal legitimate wife from the others, who were more concubines than wives. Thus they acted as servants, and the children whom they bore were neither legitimate nor equal in honor or inheritance to those of the principal wife.

Throughout El Perú the common people married only one woman, and he who took two incurred the death penalty. The Incas, who were those of royal blood, and the *curacas*, who were the overlords of vassals, had the privilege of having as many wives as they wished or could support, but with the distinction described above of the legitimate wife from the concubines. And like heathen, they said that this custom was permitted and provided among them because it was necessary that the nobles have many wives in order to have many children; in order to make war and govern the commonwealth and augment their empire they affirmed that they must have many nobles, because it was they who spent themselves in war and died in battle; to carry burdens, till the soil, and act as servants there were more than enough of the common people, who (because they were not a people who were employed in the dangerous pursuits in which the nobles engaged), however few of them might be born, still multiplied greatly. They were use-

less for government, nor was it legal for them to concern themselves with it, which would be an offense against the office itself, because governing and dispensing justice was the function of persons of noble birth, and not of plebians.

Returning to those of La Florida, their ordinary food is maize, in place of bread, and their viands are beans and calabashes of the variety they call here *romana*, and a great deal of fish because of the many rivers they possess. There is a scarcity of meat, for they have no species of domesticated cattle. They kill in the chase with their bows and arrows red deer, fallow deer, and roe deer, which are numerous and larger than those of Spain. They kill many kinds of birds, both in order to eat the flesh and to adorn their heads with the feathers, which they wear in showy, multicolored headdresses half a fathom tall; thereby they distinguish the nobles from the plebians in time of peace, and the soldiers from those who are not such in time of war. Their drink is clear water, just as nature gives it to them, without the admixture of anything else. The meat and the fish they eat must be very well dressed and cooked, and the fruit very ripe. They will never eat it green or half-ripe and laugh at the Castilians for eating green fruit.

Those who say that they eat human flesh attribute this to them falsely, at least to those of the provinces our governor discovered. On the contrary they abominate it, as Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca notes in Chapters 14 and 17 of his *Naufragios*, where he says that certain Castilians who were lodged apart died of hunger, and that their remaining companions ate those who had died, except for the buttocks, which none of them would eat, whereupon, he says, the Indians were so scandalized that they were on the point of killing all those who were left in another lodging. It may be that they eat it [human flesh] at places where our people did not go; La Florida is so large and extensive that there is room for all [customs].

They go about naked except for some garments of chamois-skin of various colors almost like very short breeches, which cover them decently, as much as necessary, in front and behind. In the place of a cloak they wear mantles clasped at the throat, which reach half-way down the leg; they are of extremely fine marten-skins, which give off the odor of musk. They also make them of small skins of various animals, such as several kinds of cat, fallow deer, roe deer, red deer, bears, lions, and of skins of cattle [buffalo]. Those hides they dress to such extreme perfection that the skin of a cow or a bear, with the hair on it, they prepare in a manner that leaves it so pliant and soft that it can be worn as a cloak, and it serves them for bed-covering at night. Their hair grows long and they wear it gathered up into a large knot

on top of their heads. For a headdress they wear a thick skein of thread in whatever color they desire, which they wind about their heads and tie the ends over the forehead in two half-knots, so that one end hangs down over either temple as far as the ears. The women dress in chamois-skin, having the whole body decently covered.

The arms these Indians carry are bows and arrows, and—although it is true that they are skillful in the use of the other weapons they have, such as pikes, lances, darts, halberds, the sling, club, broadsword and staff, and other similar ones, if there are others except the harquebus and crossbow which they do not possess—with all this they do not [ordinarily] use any other arms except the bow and arrow, because for those who carry them they are the greatest embellishment and ornament. The ancient heathen for the same reason depicted their most beloved gods, as Apollo, Diana and Cupid, with bows and arrows, for besides that which these arms signify in themselves, they are very beautiful and add to the grace and elegance of him who carries them. For all these reasons, and because of the effectiveness of these arms, which are superior to all others at both short and long range, in retreating or attacking, in fighting in battle or in the recreation of the hunt, these Indians carry them, and these arms are much used throughout the New World.

The bows are of the same height as he who carries them, and as these Indians of La Florida are generally of large stature, their bows are more than two *varas* in length and thick in proportion. They make them of oak and of various other hard and very heavy woods they have. They are so hard to bend that no Spaniard, however much he tried, was able to pull the cord back so that his hand touched his face, but the Indians through their long experience and skill drew back the cord with the greatest ease to a point behind the ear and made such valiant and wonderful shots as we shall see presently.

They make the cords of the bows from deerskin, taking a strip two finger-breadths in width from the hide, running from the tip of the tail to the head. After removing the hair they dampen and twist it tightly; one end they tie to the branch of a tree, and from the other they hang a weight of four or five *arrobas*, and they leave it thus until it becomes about the thickness of the larger strings of a bass viol. These cords are extremely strong. In order to shoot safely in such a manner that when the cord springs back it may not injure the left arm, they wear as a protection on the inner side a half-bracer, which covers them from the wrist to the part of the arm that is usually bled [*sangradura*]. It is made of thick feathers and attached to the arm with a

deerskin cord, which they give seven or eight turns at the place where the cord springs back most strongly.

This, in short, is what can be said of the life and customs of the Indians of La Florida; and now we shall return to Hernando de Soto, who asked for the conquest and the government of that great kingdom, which has been so luckless and so costly to all who have gone to it.

## V

### THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONQUEST ARE PUBLISHED IN SPAIN, AND THE GREAT PREPARATIONS THAT ARE MADE FOR IT

The Imperial Majesty granted the conquest to Hernando de Soto with the title of adelantado and marqués of a state thirty leagues in length and fifteen in breadth, in whatever place he might choose from that which he could conquer at his own expense. He was also conceded, for the term of his life, the office of governor and captain-general of La Florida, as he was also of the island of Santiago de Cuba, in order that its vecinos and inhabitants should obey him as their governor and captain, and aid him more promptly in the things that he might command them, necessary for the conquest. Hernando de Soto very prudently requested the governorship of Cuba, because it is a matter of great importance to him who goes to discover, conquer, and settle La Florida.

These titles and honors were published throughout Spain, with much noise about the new enterprise that Hernando de Soto was undertaking, of going to subjugate and win great kingdoms and provinces for the Crown of Spain. And as it was said everywhere that the captain who was doing this had been a conquistador of El Perú, and that, not content with the 100,000 ducats that he had brought from there, he was spending them in this second conquest, everyone marveled at it and considered this much better and richer than the first. Therefore from all parts of Spain there gathered many gentlemen of very illustrious lineage, many hidalgos, many soldiers experienced in the military arts who served the Spanish Crown in various parts of the world, and many citizens and laborers. All [attracted by] such favorable reports of the new conquest, and in view of such quantities of silver and gold and precious stones as they had seen brought from the New World, leaving

their lands, parents, relatives and friends, and selling their property, appeared and offered themselves personally and by letter to go on this conquest, with hopes that it would be as rich as, or richer than, the two previous ones of México and El Perú. With the same hopes, six or seven of the conquistadores who we said had returned from El Perú also were moved to go on this journey to La Florida, not considering that the land they were going in search of could not be better than that which they had left, nor yet satisfied with the riches they had brought from it; it appears rather that their desire for them increased in accordance with their nature, which is insatiable. We will name the conquistadores in the course of this *History*, as they appear.

As soon as the governor ordered his concessions to be made public, he busied himself in giving directions for the purchase of ships, arms, munitions, provisions, and the other things pertaining to such a vast enterprise as the one that he had undertaken. For these duties he chose persons, each of whom was capable in his office; he assembled soldiers and named captains and officers for the army, as we shall recount in the following chapter; in short, he prepared with all the magnificence and liberality of one who could command and who desired everything conducive to his task.

Since the general and the other captains and officials attended with such liberality to the expenditure and with such diligence to the affairs that each had in his charge, they were concluded and all of them assembled together in San Lúcar de Barrameda (where they were to embark) in a little more than the year his Majesty's concessions had provided. The ships being brought up, the appointed day having come for the arrival at this same port of the men enlisted, and all of them having assembled, they being most excellent; and the other preparations being completed, alike of ship-stores, and of much iron, steel, irons for saddlebows, spades, mattocks, panniers, ropes, and baskets—things very necessary for settlements—they embarked and began their voyage in the following manner.

## VI

### OF THE NUMBER OF MEN AND CAPTAINS WHO EMBARKED FOR LA FLORIDA

Nine hundred and fifty Spaniards of all classes met in San Lúcar de Barrameda to go for the conquest of La Florida; all young men, for there was

scarcely one among them who had gray hairs (a very important thing for withstanding the labors and difficulties offered by new conquests). To many of them the governor gave aid in the form of money, sending it to each one in accordance with his quality and condition and the following and servants that he brought with him. Many received this assistance through necessity, and others (with respect and civility, seeing the vast enterprise that the general had on his shoulders) refused to receive it, it appearing to them more fitting to assist the governor, if they could, than to be assisted by him.

When the time of the spring tides came, they embarked in seven large ships and three small ones, which had been purchased in various Spanish ports. The *adelantado*, with all his household, his wife, and family, embarked in a ship called the *San Cristóbal*, of eight hundred tons, which went as flagship of the fleet; it was well equipped with fighting men, artillery and munitions, as befitted the flagship of such a great captain.

In another ship, no smaller, called *La Magdalena*, embarked Nuño Tovar, one of the sixty conquistadores, a native of Xerez de Badajoz. This gentleman went as lieutenant general, and he took with him another nobleman, Don Carlos Enríquez, a native of the same city, the second son of one of its great estates. Luis de Moscoso de Alvarado, son of the knight commander Diosdado de Alvarado, a gentleman who was a native of Badajoz and a vecino of Zafra, and one of the sixty conquistadores, chosen and appointed *maese de campo* of the army, went as captain of the galleon called *La Concepción*, which was of more than five hundred tons' burden.

In another galleon, equally as large, called *Buena Fortuna*, went Captain Andrés de Vasconcelos, a Portuguese *fidalgo* and gentleman, native of Yelves. He took a very fine and resplendent company of Portuguese *fidalgos*, some of whom had been soldiers on the African frontiers. Diego García, son of the *alcalde* of Villanueva de Barcarrota, went as captain of another large ship, called the *San Juan*. Arias Tinoco, named as captain of infantry, went as captain of another large ship, called *Santa Bárbara*.

Alonso Romo de Cardeñosa, a brother of Arias Tinoco who also was named captain of infantry, went as captain of a small galleon called *San Anton*. With this captain went another of his brothers, named Diego Arias Tinoco, chosen as *alférez general* of the army. These three brothers were relatives of the general. Pedro Calderón, a gentleman who was a native of Badajoz, went as captain of a very fine caravel, and with him went Captain Micer Espíndola, a Genoese gentleman, who was captain of sixty halberdiers of the governor's guard. Besides these eight ships, they took two brigantines for the service of the fleet, which, being lighter and more easily

handled than the large ships, served as scouts to keep watch on the sea in every direction.

In these seven ships, the caravel and the brigantines, the 950 fighting men embarked, besides the sailors and the people needed for the management and service of each vessel. In addition to the people whom we have named, there went with the fleet twelve priests, eight clerics and four friars. The clerics whose names can be recalled are Rodrigo de Gallegos, a native of Sevilla and a relative of Baltasar de Gallegos; Diego de Bañuelos and Francisco del Pozo, natives of Córdoba; and Dionisio de París, a native of France, of the same city of París. The names of the other four clerics have been forgotten. The friars were named Fray Luis de Soto, a native of Villanueva de Barcarrota and a relative of Governor Hernando de Soto; Fray Juan de Gallegos, a native of Sevilla and brother of Captain Baltasar de Gallegos—both friars of the Order of St. Francis; and Fray Francisco de la Rocha, a native of Badajoz, of the advocacy and insignia of the Most Holy Trinity. All were most exemplary and learned men.

With this fleet of La Florida went that of México, composed of twenty large ships, of which Hernando de Soto also was general as far as the place of the island of Santiago de Cuba, where it separated from the others to go to Vera Cruz. There was named as its general, from that point onward, a prominent nobleman called Gonzalo de Salazar, the first Christian born in Granada after the Moors left from there; wherefore, though he was already a nobleman and hidalgo, the Catholic kings of glorious memory who won that city gave him great privileges and granted him favors from which he founded an entailed estate for his descendants. This gentleman had been a conquistador of México, and was returning as factor of the imperial hacienda of the city of México.

In this order the thirty ships of the two fleets left for the bar of San Lúcar and set sail on April 6 of the year 1538, and they navigated that day and many others with all the good fortune and fair weather that could be desired. The fleet of La Florida was so well supplied with all kinds of ship-stores that all who went in it were given double rations, an unwise thing, because all of the large surplus was squandered; but the general's munificence was such, and so great was his satisfaction in taking with him such a brilliant and noble company, that he had little regard for anything except his desire to regale them.